

# U.S. SENATOR BEN CARDIN



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Dear Fellow Marylander:

More Americans voted in the 2020 presidential election than in any previous election in our nation's history. More than 159 million Americans voted – 66.7%. In terms of a percentage of the eligible voting population, you would need to go back more than [100 years](#) for an instance of higher turnout.

Truth: Joe Biden won the popular vote with [81,283,098](#) votes, or 51.3 percent of the votes cast.

Truth: Joe Biden won the Electoral College vote [306 to 232](#).

Truth: There were no instances of voting irregularities that would change the outcomes at a state or national level. This is according to voting officials, courts, and even Donald Trump's final [attorney general, William Barr](#).

With more Americans voting this year than ever before, it makes sense that states set individual records for voter participation. This was true in Maryland, our neighbors in Virginia and the District of Columbia, as well as state like Georgia and Arizona.

Why did more Americans vote in our most recent election? Pollsters and historians will be debating that point for years to come. One things that holds true is that in the middle of a pandemic, election officials throughout most of the country understood that in-person voting on a single day during a short time-window does not work for many eligible voters.

Pre-pandemic, Oregon, Washington and Colorado, Hawaii and Utah conducted statewide elections primarily by mail. [Oregon](#) became the very first state to go to all-mail elections in 2000. The men and women of our military rightly have been eligible to vote by mail in every state for years, as well.

In 2020, when reducing the number of large public groups was a health necessity, Maryland and other states followed their lead and [expanded options](#) for eligible voters to send in their ballots by mail. This is how the president of the United States, Donald Trump, voted.

In addition, secure drop-boxes, which allowed the convenience of voting in the safety of your own home without the reliance on the U.S. Postal Service, became commonplace in many states. Myrna and I utilized a drop-box near my home this year, forgoing an annual tradition of going to Fort Garrison Elementary School to cast my ballot in-person.

I understand that not everyone liked the outcome of the 2020 presidential election. In every contest, there are winners and losers. But for those of us who support democracy “for the people, by the people,” the sheer number of people who voted in the last presidential election is a win for our country.

In response to this record participation, Republican officials have filed [over 250 measures in 43 states](#) that would restrict voter participation and make it harder for eligible voters to vote.

This week, [Georgia’s governor signed into law](#) one of the most sweeping package of bills that limits the use of drop-boxes, reduces early voting and makes absentee voting by mail more complicated. Under the false pretense of voter integrity, Republicans pushed through a bill that primarily targets the record 1.3 million Georgians who voted by mail and contributed to losses in tight presidential and senate races. [President Biden was right](#) when he said about this new Georgia law: *“This is Jim Crow in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It must end. We have a moral and constitutional obligation to act.”*

One of the most obviously discriminatory measures designed to suppress the vote is limiting voting on Sundays, a time when many Black churches in Georgia – and Maryland and many other states – encourage [“Souls to the Polls”](#) during early voting periods.

Identification requirements may sound benign to many, but more than 20 million adult Americans do not have or cannot afford an official state ID. [According to the American Civil Liberties Union](#), *“These voters are disproportionately low-income, racial and ethnic minorities, the elderly, and people with disabilities.”*

Republicans have admitted publicly that attempts to roll back absentee voting come are meant to curb Democrats from getting in their ballots. One of my colleagues told FOX News, *“[Mail-in balloting](#) is a nightmare for us ... we're never going to win again presidentially.”*

Voting is a fundamental right of citizenship in the United States and it should not be denied or made more complicated because of the color of your skin or how you may vote. Attempts at such blatant, systemic voter suppression are an unfortunate part of American history and we need to finally end these tactics.

In the Senate, I have been proud to sponsor S. 1, “For the People Act” —companion legislation to H.R. 1, which was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives on March 3. The [Senate Rules Committee](#) held a hearing on this legislation this week.

Our package of reforms aims to guarantee every American citizen full access to the ballot by addressing voter intimidation and suppression, which are among the biggest examples

of systemic racism in America. This legislation includes my [Deceptive Practices and Voter Intimidation Prevention Act](#), which criminalizes the use of deceptive practices and voter intimidation efforts that are deliberately designed to suppress minorities' voting rights. It includes my [Democracy Restoration Act](#), which would strengthen American communities by restoring voting rights to individuals when they have returned home after being released from incarceration. The United States is one of the few Western democracies that allows the permanent denial of voting rights for individuals with criminal convictions. It's simply wrong that state disenfranchisement laws deny citizens participation in our democracy.

The bill also would end the corrupting power of dark money in our campaigns and put an end to gerrymandering. In addition, it strengthens ethics laws to ensure that public servants work for the public interest.

The "For the People Act" would make it easier for eligible Americans to vote, not harder. The bill would cut through the intentional red tape some states have developed and allow for automatic voter registration nationwide. It modernizes voting systems, prohibits discriminatory voter purges, expands vote by mail and promotes early voting and online voter registration.

The 2020 election demonstrated that safe and accessible voting also can be secure. Our legislation would create a national strategy to protect our democratic institutions from foreign interference, increase oversight over election vendors, and enhances federal support for state voting system security upgrades, including paper ballot voting systems.

The "For the People Act" also increases transparency in election financing and strengthens ethics laws and accountability.

The [Fifteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution](#) says, "*The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color or previous condition of servitude. The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.* "

It is time that we put those words into action and for Congress to act pursuant to its constitutional authority. We must take up and pass as well the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, which would restore the damage done by the Supreme Court when it gutted the Voting Rights Act in the [Shelby County](#) case.

We cannot be complicit in allowing voter suppression and the disenfranchisement of communities of color infringe upon the rights of citizens.

I look forward to Senate consideration of the "For the People Act" and the chance to stand up for voters and our democracy.

Thank you. Stay well.



Ben Cardin